

## ABSTRACT

5       The present invention provides systems and methods for  
secure transaction management and electronic rights protection.  
Electronic appliances such as computers equipped in accordance  
with the present invention help to ensure that information is  
accessed and used only in authorized ways, and maintain the  
integrity, availability, and/or confidentiality of the information.  
Such electronic appliances provide a distributed virtual  
10       distribution environment (VDE) that may enforce a secure chain of  
handling and control, for example, to control and/or meter or  
otherwise monitor use of electronically stored or disseminated  
information. Such a virtual distribution environment may be used  
to protect rights of various participants in electronic commerce and  
15       other electronic or electronic-facilitated transactions. Distributed  
and other operating systems, environments and architectures, such  
as, for example, those using tamper-resistant hardware-based  
processors, may establish security at each node. These techniques  
may be used to support an all-electronic information distribution,  
20       for example, utilizing the "electronic highway."